

444 (B) WISBECH

(later H.B.)

Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the Year 1923.

*To the Mayor, Aldermen and Members of the Wisbech Urban
District Council.*

GENTLEMEN,

The Report for the past year, ending December 31st, 1923, which I again have the honour of submitting to you, with respect to the sanitary conditions prevailing and the general health of the district, bring forth the following remarks.

In view of the fact, that no condition prejudicial to the health of the area has existed, it has not been necessary to carry out any measures, other than those usually carried out, in order to keep the Town and District, in its usual healthy and cleanly condition.

We have again enjoyed a remarkable freedom from diseases of an infectious or contagious nature, and it is gratifying to me to be able to tell you that the past year has been a record one, in this respect; we experienced no serious outbreak of zymotic sickness, with the exception of a small epidemic of Typhoid Fever, in the middle of the year. The cause of this outbreak, in spite of the most strenuous research, was never really traced out; the cases were ten in number, mainly of a mild type, and of these nine were treated in the Isolation Hospital; which undoubtedly was the reason why this disease rapidly died down.

Amongst other infectious illnesses, all we had to deal with were three cases of Scarlet Fever, three of Diphtheria, which were all treated in the hospital, one of Puerperal Fever, two of Erysipelas, and no case of Small Pox, nor of Ophthalmia Neonatorum was notified.



Again I have to record the ready willingness to take advantage of the use of the Isolation Hospital where nearly all these cases were treated, and to express my gratitude for the great zeal displayed by the staff of this Institution, and the Officials in the town, and in their rendering assistance where needed : both in the use of and distribution of copious quantities of disinfectants, and in disinfection where illness has existed.

Consumption which unfortunately always exists in the district was notified in twenty-five persons, of these twelve males and ten females were afflicted with Pulmonary Phthisis, and one male and two females with Tuberculous Disease of Glands or other parts of the body, and I have to record that three males and five females died from this disease of the respiratory system, and one female from other tubercular disease.

As you know, a very valuable assistance in keeping the health of the younger children maintained is the existence of the Child Welfare Centre, which is really doing a good work, and still becoming more popular yearly : meetings are held weekly, when no less than one thousand, one hundred and four mothers have attended, bringing with them one thousand five hundred and fifty-four children during the year, from this and the neighbouring district ; suitable hygienic principals are taught, and proper infant feeding suggested, and I cannot too strongly suggest that support should be liberally given to this excellent work.

GENERAL STATISTICS.

The area of this district is 6,475 acres, with a present population, estimated to be 11,440, whilst the number of inhabited houses, being about 1,830, with a rateable value of £53,830, and the sum that is realised by a penny rate, about £160. It is difficult to estimate the number of families or separate occupiers, but these probably amount to 1,900, or more.

There were two hundred and forty-eight births this year, compared with two hundred and twenty-eight last year, of which number one hundred and twenty-nine were legitimate males, and one hundred and ten legitimate females ; and nine illegitimate males and eight illegitimate females, giving a birth rate of 21.6 per one thousand of the population, and in association with this two deaths were due to pregnancy.

There were eleven deaths of legitimate infants under one year, five being males, six females, and three deaths of illegitimate infants, one male and two females, giving an infantile death rate of 56.4 per one thousand births.

The number of deaths from all causes was one hundred and thirty-seven, of these sixty-four were males and seventy-three females, being a decrease in the number of deaths of forty-four, compared with last year, and giving a death rate of 11.9 per one thousand of the estimated population. Included in these deaths were two males and three females from Pneumonia, six males and five females who died from Bronchitis, six males and eighteen females from Cancerous diseases, and three males and two females from affections of the Heart.

With respect to infectious illnesses, one male and three females died from Measles, one male from Whooping Cough, one female from Diphtheria, one female from Influenza, and one male and two female children from Diarrhœa.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES DURING THE YEAR.

			Total Cases Notified.		Treated in Hospital.		Total Deaths.
Diphtheria	...	...	3	...	3	...	1
Scarlet Fever	...	...	3	...	3	...	0
Enteric and Paratyphoid			11	..	8	...	0
Puerperal Fever	...	...	1	...	0	...	0
Erysipelas	..	...	2	...	0	...	0

THE TABULATED NUMBER OF DEATHS AT VARIOUS AGES.

Under 1 year of age	14
„ 2 years „	7
„ 4 „ „	2
„ 7 „ „	1
„ 10 „ „	1
„ 15 „ „	1
„ 20 „ „	3
„ 35 „ „	6
„ 45 „ „	8
„ 65 „ „	25
Over 65 „ „	69
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NOTIFICATION OF TUBERCULOSIS.

Age Periods Between	New Cases.				Deaths.			
	Pulmonary.		Non-Pulmonary.		Pulmonary.		Non-Pulmonary.	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
1 and 5	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1
5 „ 10	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10 „ 15	1	2	1	1	0	1	0	0
15 „ 20	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0
25 „ 35	4	2	0	0	2	0	0	0
35 „ 45	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
45 „ 55	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	12	10	1	2	3	5	0	1
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

CAUSES OF SICKNESS.

There has existed no special cause in the district which has brought about sickness during the year, and no trade deleterious to health, has been carried on. It is very gratifying to again to be able to record the very ready assistance I have received in the matter of notifications of infectious sickness; and the great appreciation of the value of the Isolation Hospital when it has been used for cases. Fortunately, the Small Pox Hospital, which is ever ready for use, has not been called upon.

I would again like to express my great appreciation of the valuable work done by the two District Nurses; I cannot too highly speak of this work, which is brought about by the Nursing Association, who deserve all the support that can be given them; both the General and the Maternity Nurses are available at any time and for any one who wish for their services.

There exists one School Clinic in the Town, and Ambulance facilities are still provided free of cost, also the supply in needy cases of Diphtheria Antitoxin and Pathological and Bacteriological examinations when necessary. Venereal diseases are little prevalent, and ample provision is made for the treatment of these.

SANITARY ADMINISTRATION.

Accompanying this report. is the report of the Sanitary Inspector, from which you will learn of the great amount of work that has again been done in inspections, visits, and the removal of nuisances, in the district; when accompanying him I have found the town kept cleanly, and well looked after; the Public Building, Factories,

Schools and Slaughter-houses are still kept under constant supervision, and show continued improvement in their sanitary conditions. The nineteen factories, and sixty-seven workshops, in which no deleterious trades are carried on, are still kept in a satisfactory condition.

During the past year, the sewerage system has worked well; and abundance of the Marham water has been used—both night and day; in the erection of the contemplated new houses, I would strongly advocate that these should be provided with flush tanks, which would not only add to the comfort of the occupiers of these, but materially assist the general sewerage system.

PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF.

The duties connected with this, are still carried out by the M.O.H., who is a part time officer, the Town Surveyor, the Sanitary Inspector, who are both whole time officers, together with the Council Employees who are specially needed for sanitary work.

LIGHTING.

I regret that this leaves much to be desired, especially during the dark nights; but I trust in the near future, that more light may be given, which would add so much to the comfort of the inhabitants.

HOUSING.

There have been thirty-eight new houses erected during the year, but in view of the fact that many of the dwellings now shelter two families at least, and it is practically impossible to deal with cases where overcrowding exists. I note with great satisfaction, that the building of several new houses is in early contemplation, and I need hardly emphasise that these are sorely needed. Eight of the new houses were State aided.

UNFIT DWELLING HOUSES.

I—INSPECTIONS.

I.—Three hundred and twenty-seven dwelling houses were inspected for housing defects.

II.—The number of dwelling houses which were inspected and recorded under the Housing Regulations (1910) were one hundred and sixty-six.



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III.—Number of dwelling houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation, none.

IV.—Number of dwelling houses found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation, one hundred and sixty-two.

2.—REMEDY OF DEFECTS WITHOUT SERVICE OF FORMAL NOTICE.

The number of defective dwelling houses rendered fit, in consequence of informal action by the Local Authorities or their officers, one hundred and forty-three.

3.—ACTION UNDER STATUTORY POWERS.

(A) Proceedings under Section 28 of the Housing, Town Planning &c. Acts, 1919.

I.—Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs, nine.

II.—Number of dwelling houses which were rendered fit—

(a) by owners, nine.

(b) by local authority in default of owners, none.

III.—Number of dwelling houses in which closing orders became operative in pursuance of declarations by owners of intention to close, none.

(B) Proceedings under Public Health Acts.

I.—Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied, twenty-one.

II.—Number of dwelling houses in which defects were remedied—

(a) by owners, nineteen.

(b) by local authority in default of owners, none.

(C) Proceedings under Section 17 and 18 of the Housing, Town Planning, &c. Acts, 1909.

None were considered necessary.

The condition of the dairies, cowsheds and milk shops continue in a very satisfactory condition; the milk supply is excellent and abundant, and it is very gratifying to be able to report that meat, fish and other food stuffs are plentiful and good, and very little has been condemned as unfit for human consumption.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Very faithfully yours,

HARRY GROOM, M.D.,

Medical Officer of Health.

April, 1924.

Sanitary Inspector's Annual Report for the Year 1923.

SANITARY INSPECTOR'S OFFICE,
TOWN HALL,
WISBECH,
March, 1924.

*To the Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors of the Borough
of Wisbech.*

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to present to you my report for the year ending December 31st, 1923, being my Fourth Annual Report.

NUISANCES.

Under the heading of "Nuisances," i.e., those nuisances which may be dealt with under the nuisance sections of the Public Health Act, 1875, five hundred and eighty-six inspections were made of one hundred and seventy-eight separate premises where such nuisances existed. In connection with these visits, one hundred and sixty-five preliminary and five statutory notices were served. As a result one hundred and sixty-five of the matters were abated, four were in hand at the end of the year, and nine remained to be complied with.

The sanitary accommodation at one school was remodelled during the year, the old insanitary trough closets were taken out, and a range of four pedestal wash-down W.C's. was installed with automatic flushing arrangements.

It is again worthy of note, that practically all the nuisances found, were dealt with under the preliminary notice, and abated without the matters having to be brought directly to the notice of the Council, in order that statutory measures might be taken.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

During the year there were reported ten cases of Typhoid Fever, three cases of Diphtheria, and three cases of Scarlet Fever, making sixteen cases in all.

Nine of the Typhoid Fever cases were notified between the 28th of June and the 14th of July. The remaining case occurred in December, and was not traceable to the previous outbreak.

The origin of the cases occurring in July was not conclusively proved. Exhaustive enquiries were instituted along many channels where there was any suspicious circumstance in the history of the cases. Samples of drinking water were sent for examination from each house, and one sample of ice-cream was bacteriologically examined, but every sample showed a negative result. As each case occurred, very prompt measures were taken to prevent the spread of the disease, and large quantities of bedding and other articles were disinfected. The outbreak in its early stages was somewhat alarming, owing to the fact that the cases were situated in different parts of the town with no apparent local connection, and we may congratulate ourselves that the out break was so quickly stamped out.

In regard to the case which occurred in December, investigations pointed to the fact that the case was imported.

There was no connection between the four cases of Diphtheria. At two houses where the disease occurred, the drains on being tested, were found defective, and have since been relaid. One case was evidently imported from outside the Borough, and the origin of the remaining case could not be traced.

The Scarlet Fever cases were isolated ones with no direct communication between them.

Of the whole fifteen cases, thirteen were removed to the Isolation Hospital and two cases only were treated at home.

The total number of fifteen cases occurring during the year, is exceedingly low, and must be almost a record for the Borough.

HOUSING, TOWN PLANNING, &c. ACTS, 1909—1919. AND
INCREASE OF RENT AND MORTGAGE INTEREST (RESTRICTIONS) ACT, 1920.

Under the Housing and Town Planning Acts, one hundred and sixty-six inspections were made during the year. One hundred and sixty-two houses were found to be not in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation as required by the Acts. In each case the owner was acquainted with the existing conditions of the property. Resulting from this, the number of houses rendered fit for habitation was one hundred and forty-three in consequence of informal action, and ten by statutory action. The number of houses in course of repair at the close of the year was fifteen, leaving only ten houses under notice where the work was not already commenced.

Under Section 2 (2) of the Increase of Rent, &c. Act, one Certificate only was granted to the tenant of a house where the house was in bad repair. This house has since been repaired.

Compared with the previous year, more repairs to houses have been put in hand, but still there is much to be done in this respect. There are several properties in the town which merit condemnation owing to their situation and bad condition, but owing to the shortage of houses this cannot be carried out. The intention of the Council to build additional cottage property of the class more suitable to the means of the working classes, will undoubtedly go far to alleviate a crying need in the town, and until we have many more houses of this type built, the dilapidated and unhealthy properties in different parts of the town will still remain occupied.

FACTORIES AND WORKSHOPS.

Twenty inspections of factories and one hundred and thirteen inspections of workshops (including bakehouses) were made.

The defects met with may be summarised as follows :—

Workshops with insufficient sanitary accommodation	...	1
„ „ defective „ „	...	2
„ „ „ drainage ...	...	2
„ „ „ lighting and ventilation	...	1
„ „ structural defects ...	...	2

The above defects were all remedied under preliminary notice, and no statutory action was found necessary. The premises generally are in good condition.

UN SOUND FOOD.

The total quantity of unsound food condemned and destroyed as being unfit for human consumption amounted to 1055 lbs. The whole of this on being declared by me so unfit, was voluntarily surrendered by the owners.

The food condemned was made up as follows:—

794 lbs. fresh meat.

9 lbs. frozen meat.

252 lbs. fruit.

The above total weight, is considerably less than last year, i.e., 1813 lbs., and speaks well for the class of food now being sold in the Borough. The fresh meat being sold at present is of excellent quality.

SLAUGHTER-HOUSES.

The slaughter-houses in the Borough were inspected frequently throughout the year, and were mainly satisfactory. Some further improvements have been instituted in the methods of storage and collection of garbage and manure. The premises are limewashed quarterly and kept in good order. My visits have been well received and any suggestions I have made from time to time, have been readily carried out by the owners.

DAIRIES, COWSHEDS AND MILK-SHOPS.

There are eight farms where milk is produced, with twelve cowsheds and four dairies, in the Borough. These have been visited during the year. Two cases were found where the limewashing was overdue, and this was carried out on the occupiers attention being called to the same. For the most part the premises were found to be carried on in a satisfactory manner.

There were at the end of the year thirteen registered milk-shops. Three of these premises only sell milk as a separate business. The remaining premises may be classified as follows:—Three Butchers, five General Grocers, one Baker and Confectioner and one General Business.

The General Business premises were objected to as a Milk-shop and the occupier appeared before the Council to show cause why the Council should not remove the premises from the Register. After hearing the case the Council agreed to allow the premises to remain, provided the milk was stored in a sealed container with tap.

SHOPS.

Fifty shops were visited during the year. In a few cases caution had to be given against keeping the premises open after the specified closing hour.

Two infringements of the Shops Acts were reported to the Council and legal proceedings was authorised to be taken on both accounts. (1) for not displaying the required notice stating the Shop Assistants weekly half-holiday, and (2) for working a young person for a longer period in one week than is allowed by the Act.

Owing to an error in date on the summons, the first count was dismissed, and in this the Council refrained from proceeding any further.

The second count was successful and a fine of £1 and costs was imposed.

COMMON LODGING HOUSES.

The Common Lodging Houses are three in number and have been periodically visited during the year. The houses have been fairly well kept and are limewashed throughout twice yearly. There is still no Common Lodging House in the Borough providing accommodation for females, the present houses being licensed for men only.

GENERAL.

In general the year from a Public Health point of view has been good. The number of notifiable infectious diseases has been very small indeed and it cannot be too strongly emphasised that good sanitation is essential to bodily health.

There are three questions of considerable importance in this respect that will sooner or later have to be taken in hand in the Borough.

Firstly every W.C. should be provided with adequate flushing arrangements. It may be surprising to some, that the greater percentage of the W.C's. in the Borough are still without adequate flushing cisterns. By providing these we should have clean fittings, and considerably less blocked drains, instead of the many foul fittings which are now frequently met with.

Secondly, the provision of galvanised iron ash-bins in place of the defective and foul boxes at present to be seen at the edge of the footpath in all parts of the town on collecting days.

Thirdly, the greater and more difficult matter of the derelict canal in the centre of the town. Certainly the recent repairs to the banks have considerably improved matters, and are highly commendable both from the point of view of providing labour and safeguarding pedestrians, but at some future date the question of filling in the

water-way will have to be considered seriously. If the canal was filled in as a beginning from the Lynn Road Sluice to the St. Peter's School, we should be benefited to the extent of ridding the more populous parts of the town of foul banks, which are in the hot summer months a large fly breeding area, the properties adjoining would certainly become more valuable and thereby improve the housing conditions in that neighbourhood, and thirdly, a good wide road would be provided which would go far to solving the traffic problem which is so acute to-day, as the traffic would be able to use this road, via Canal Place to Lynn Road, instead of passing through the busier parts of the town.

In conclusion, Gentlemen, I again thank you for your kind support and consideration given me during the year in my endeavours for the improvement of the general sanitary condition of the Borough.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

E. J. SUTCLIFFE, M.S.I.A.,

Sanitary Inspector.

